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to come, so she stayed about the village. Her husband said he thought the child would be born to-morrow. 843

Aug. 12. Went to work in the taro garden and brought in a load of taro in the evening.

Aug. 13. Sat around most of the day, but brought in a load of firewood she could barely carry. When I said she ought not to have brought so much she laughed. Her husband said it would help the child to be born quickly.

Aug. 14. Did little besides household duties and getting firewood.

Aug. 15. Walked about five miles to a neighbouring village and the same distance back.

Aug. 16. Household duties, sat around most of the day. Brought firewood as usual.

Aug. 17. Did little besides cook taro and bring in wood. There seemed to be a definite drop in her abdomen, but she said she had no pain.

Aug. 18. No record, as I was away all day.

Aug. 19. She went with another woman and myself into the bush to gather canarium almonds. We went to a spot at least four miles from the village, and hunted for nuts in the fallen leaves for a couple of hours or more. Manēv carried a heavy load of them home, and added half a dozen coco-nut shells full of water half-way back. [227]

Aug. 20. She went to the bush to get bread-fruit. During the day she felt ill and lay on the ground. One of the men in the party told me later that he thought the child was going to be born then and there. He told Manēv she ought not to go to the bush any more.

Aug. 21. Sat around talking to me. Slept part of the day. Did the usual cooking and getting of firewood. Said she felt the child's movements, but was not in pain.

Aug. 22. Sat around, said the child's movements were making her uncomfortable. But she brought in firewood and did the cooking as usual. Towards evening she got some sand and spread it on the ground and lay down on it.

Aug. 23. Went with all the other villagers to the new taro garden for the ceremonial planting. Took over a load of taro stalks, and did some of the planting, which involved stooping continuously for hours at a time.

Aug. 24. Sat around. Did the usual cooking and getting wood.

Aug. 25. Sat around all day. At dusk went and lay on her side before the fire inside her hut, saying she had pains in her back. Her husband went and fetched his mother, and moved his own bed and a few personal belongings out of the hut into another close by. Labour pains continued all night, and were apparently severe. 844

Aug. 26. Child born at sunrise.

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of the bush, bread-fruits were to be seen lying about on the ground in large quantities in various stages of rottenness, where no one had chanced to pass that way to pick them up.

The bread-fruits are obtained by climbing the tree and knocking them down; those above hand reach are hooked off by jerking them from their stalks with a stick lashed, pointing backwards, on to the end of a long pole.

Bread-fruit is cooked by being laid on the top of a fire of sticks, directly exposed to the flames (Pl. 34). When the outer skin is completely charred, the inside is done to their liking. The blackened skin is scraped off with a black-lip oyster-shell knife, and the soft inside pulled to pieces with the fingers and eaten in great hunks. The large seeds it contains are very much relished. They may be eaten as they are, or cooked again by being laid in the embers, just as we roast chestnuts, which they strongly resemble both in look and flavour. Bread-fruit is never pounded or made into pudding.

Leaves eaten as vegetables. Although the taro plant is cultivated principally for the sake of the tubers, its leaves are also used as food. Other kinds of leaves, grown in the taro garden or wild in the bush, are likewise eaten, also the tender tips of some species of bracken (*Pteris*). They are prepared by being boiled in pots with water, generally sea-water, or with the addition of some sea-water, for the sake of the salt. When done, they look and taste not unlike spinach. In the mountains, where there is no pottery, they are cooked by being thrust into a length of bamboo, without water, the bamboo being then laid on the fire. As I know from experience, the resulting dish is both succulent and tasty. (I was told that pig, cut into small pieces, is also cooked in this way, but I did not see it done.) I have never seen this method of cooking in bamboo without water in use among the coast natives, where it is not necessary since they can obtain, from the women of Malasang, pots in which to boil their food.

Nobody would deliberately cut down a coco-nut palm in order to eat its heart, but if one is blown down, or has to be removed for any reason, the heart is hacked out and eaten with great enjoyment, either raw, or, more frequently, boiled like taro, in a pot lined with leaves.

There is a species of seaweed which can be obtained from the reef at low tide, which is eagerly sought for and eaten just as it comes from the reef, in spite of, or perhaps because of, its saltness.

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Unfortunately, I omitted to bring home a specimen for identification. It consists of tiny green globules, and looks not unlike a bunch of grapes in the earliest stages of formation. Guppy (1887, p. 89) mentions an alga, a species of *Caulerpa*, as being eaten with relish by the natives of Treasury Island, which from his description may be the same or perhaps an allied species.

There are some varieties of edible fungi; they are not cultivated or made objects of special search, but if seen in the course of a journey through the bush, will be gathered and taken home. I cannot find in my notes any reference to the method employed in cooking them. Most of the fungi growing in the bush are avoided and are thought to be poisonous.

By far the most important of all the nuts available, and in the front rank of their foodstuffs, is the coco-nut. The meat, especially that of the nuts in the green stage, when it is soft and creamy, is a permanent stand-by as an article of diet, and at a later stage it is used in making ceremonial pudding. The cool sweetish liquid inside a green nut provides a most refreshing drink, which, fortunately, can be obtained all the year round. The nuts are procured by climbing the trunk and knocking them down. Climbing is assisted by tying a bit of fibre round the feet, which then grasp the trunk, the body is supported by the grip thus obtainable, while both hands reach up as far as possible, grasp the trunk above the head, and pull the body up towards them, till the knees are bent so as nearly to touch them, the feet then taking another hold. Men and women, boys and girls, are all very skilful at doing this, but the older men send the small boys up if there are any about. The nuts are opened in this way: the outer sheath is removed by impaling it on a stick sharpened to a point and stuck in the ground at a suitable angle. Having removed this outer covering, the opener takes a trade knife, and with two or three sharp taps, cuts off a piece of the top of the shell as we slice the top off a boiled egg. The liquid is then drunk straight from the nut. If there is no knife handy, two of the 'eyes' will be pierced with a stick or sharp stone, but drinking is then a much slower process, and the other is preferred.

Canarium almonds are esteemed a great delicacy, and the time when they are ripe is eagerly anticipated. This is one of the few products that are not available all the year round. During the time of my residence, the first nuts were brought in on May 14, and the

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crop was just about finished when I left at the end of September. Throughout the season they are brought in every day in large quantities, women and girls walking many miles to collect them, and spending hours hunting for them among the fallen leaves and underbrush that cover the ground everywhere in the bush (*ahait winoa* = to gather almonds from the ground). I went with them on many occasions, and can testify to their diligence. The trees are much prized, and are always left standing when a patch of ground is cleared for a new taro garden.

The nuts are cracked with a stone or a lump of coral. They are always eaten immediately, unless it is desired to use them to make ceremonial pudding, when they are grated on rough coral, or pounded, and mixed with taro. So far as I know, these people do not store the nuts for future use, or smoke them as is done at Sa'a (Ivens, 1927, p. 367).

Ceremony for first almonds.

Up till recently a ceremony was performed, corresponding with that described by Ivens for the SE. Solomons (p. 367), on the occasion of the ripening of the first almonds. Owing to the disapproval of the native mission teacher, it did not take place in the year of my residence, but I obtained the following account of it.

When the first ripe nuts are discovered, probably by finding on the ground some whose fleshy, purple outer covering has been eaten by the pigeons, who throw down the hard centre, men collect stones suitable for cracking the almonds, and take them to the bush. Some of them climb the tree whose nuts are ripe first. Others stay below. Those in the tree throw down a large number of nuts and then come down and join those below. Some crack the nuts, others bring them to the men who are busy cracking them. The women must stop in the village, except for a few who go to the garden to bring back a supply of taro.

When the men have cracked plenty of almonds, they get a leaf of the bush banana and pour all the kernels into it. They all hold it by its edges and stretch it out to its full length. Two logs are cut and laid on the ground parallel to one another; short pieces of wood are laid on top of these transversely. The leaf full of almonds is laid on these transverse logs, and covered up with another banana leaf. The two leaves and their contents are then tied firmly together with rough cane or creeper, and the supporting logs are taken

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away. The resulting parcel (measuring perhaps 4 or 5 ft. × 2 ft.) is called *met* ('dead'), and represents the body of a dead man. It is fixed on to a pole in the same way in which pigs are carried, and brought to the village, the men singing as they go. It is put down in front of the principal house; in Kurtatchi village this would be the hut occupied by Pinari's chief wife. Those who take part in bringing it in may not eat or drink or chew the betel-mixture from the time when they awake that morning.

Then they call for the *tsunaun* of the place (at Kurtatchi, Pinari and his two *wevnē-*, Pari and Matēv). The *tsunaun* must make fire by rubbing two sticks together, inside the hut, calling the while the names of all the *war*. They take some almonds out of the *met* and throw them into the fire, as soon as it is properly kindled. Then they take lime, and pass it round the fire, taking care not to spill any into the flames. They tap several times on the outside of the lime-pot. A few drops of water and the milk of a drinking coco-nut are scattered in a circle all round the fire. Then they take a taro and put it into the fire, calling on all the *war* who are in the fire to come and drink. Each *tsunaun* calls the names of the *war* of his own lineage. Then they break up some of the fruits of the betel-pepper and throw them into the fire. Then the *tsunaun* take some lime and put it on the ears of all the men who went to gather the almonds in the bush. After this these men can eat and drink and chew the betel-mixture for the first time that day.

Finally, the *tsunaun* break up the *met* and eat some of the almonds inside it. One of the women *tsunaun* (in this village it was Pari) fills a *kbbā* with nuts from the *met*, and takes it to the women, who eat on their side of the hut. When all, both men and women, have finished eating, the slit-gong is beaten. If, when all have eaten as much as they can, there are still some almonds left in the *met*, each person takes a share of them and carries them off to eat at home.

The boys wearing the *upi* are not allowed to take any part in this ceremony. They may not eat almonds at any time after they have put on the hat at the *wapi* ceremony, until a special bit of ritual has been gone through, which consists of their being given some nuts to eat in public, thus removing the taboo.

At the conclusion of the ceremony for the first almonds a game is played with tops made of coco-nut shell. The fibrous sheath of

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Mangoes grow in the bush, but do not, so far as I know, receive any attention, though the locality of each tree is known When passing anywhere near one, most people will turn aside to gather the fruit. They like to dip it into their lime-pot before taking a bite; this is said to add to the flavour.

Pumpkins and some forms of marrow grow in the taro garden, and in some places are found wild in the bush; possibly these are escapes. They were sometimes offered to me, but are not much used or liked.

Sugar-cane is available. Bits of it are sucked with great relish. It is tough and stringy and not very sweet; probably it suffers from lack of attention. No use is made of it except to suck sections of the cane as we eat sweets.

The long narrow fruit of the small-leaved mangrove (*parū*), which goes red when it is ripe, is collected, skinned, and put into a basket, then it is left in the sea overnight; next morning it is washed in fresh water, boiled, and eaten as a relish, with coco-nut meat.

A small Chili pepper (*nubo*) is used to flavour the water in which other food has been boiled, this liquid is then partaken of at the meal.

2. *Flesh food*

Unless some one chances to kill a wild pig in casual hunting, pig-meat is a luxury reserved for special occasions. Domestic pigs are never killed except for a feast of considerable importance. The prestige of an important feast depends upon the number of pigs that have been killed for it. If enough cannot be procured from the village supply, or caught by the hunters, the natives will, at the present time, pay as much as £10 or £12 of our money—earned as wages in serving as indentured labourers—to a trader or planter who will sell them one.

Unless they have been wounded, wild pigs caught in the bush are generally brought into the village alive. The method of carrying them is to tie the forelegs together, and the hind legs together, and swing the animal on a pole put between the legs. A pig will perhaps be brought in thus in the morning, thrown down on the ground near a hut, and left there for hours until the men are ready to kill it. Killing is usually done by plunging a spear into the animal's body just behind the uppermost foreleg, as it lies on its

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term is *kūra*, which is apparently onomatopoeic, somewhat resembling the noise the creatures make in the bush. Each variety has its own name. One, called *lululagitʃ*, is said to come down with the rain. Some kinds have special conventions attached to their consumption (see p. 158).

Birds, especially pigeons, are much appreciated as a relish with taro. They are usually roasted whole on the embers and pulled apart with the fingers. Domestic fowls are rarely eaten, and seem to be kept only for the sake of the cock's tail feathers, which are valued as hair ornaments on ceremonial occasions. The eggs of the domestic fowl are left alone, but those of the little black bush fowl or megapode (*iowa*) are eaten with gusto when nearly ready for hatching. They are done up in little packages of leaves and cooked in hot embers, usually only on festal occasions. I failed to live up to my motto, 'Try anything once', when offered a packet of this delicacy.

When any one walking through the bush comes upon the partly decayed trunk of a fallen tree, he will root about in the soft wood in search of a particular kind of grub, yellowish-white in colour, with a body 2 or 3 inches long and perhaps half an inch thick. These are collected, taken home, and cooked, to serve as an additional 'relish' to the evening taro. They are said to be good eating because they have 'plenty of grease' (*momōna*).

3. *Sea food*

Pig being a luxury usually reserved for feasts, and other flesh food being somewhat scarce and hard to come by, the usual relish to a meal of taro consists of fish. The most highly prized of all fish is the bonito (*atūs*), but a great variety of fish can be obtained and nearly all are eaten. The various methods of catching them are described in Chapter IX.

Fish is generally cooked by being wrapped in leaves and roasted in the embers. I have never seen it being boiled. It may also be slightly smoked, so that it will keep for a short time (but never completely smoke-dried so as to be fit for storage.) In this half-smoked condition it plays the principal part as a medium of barter in the regular exchange of fish and taro which takes place between the women of different villages.

Many varieties of shell-fish are collected on the reef by the women and girls. These are boiled in native pots, and the fish is

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a still younger child who also chewed it. The practice is usually referred to as 'betel-nut chewing', but, as has been pointed out by Ivens (1927, p. 285), this is actually a transference of the name of the condiment chewed with the nut to the nut itself, which is the seed of the areca-palm (*Areca catechu* and allied species). As usual throughout the Melanesian area, the areca-nut (*bok*) is always used in conjunction with betel-pepper (*ta-nek*) and lime (*iav*), a combination referred to by Rivers in *Melanesian Society* as 'the betel-mixture', a practice which I have followed in this book. The procedure is somewhat different from that described by Ivens for the SE. Solomons. It is frequently eaten after a meal, but also at any and every opportunity as desired, much as we smoke cigarettes. The catkin-like fruit, described by Guppy (p. 95) as 'the female spike', of the betel-pepper (*ta-sian*) is much more highly relished than the leaf, which is eaten only when the fruit is scarce, or by those to whom the fruit is taboo, as in the case of a mother with a suckling child. The lime is carried in a specially cleaned-out shell of a young coco-nut (also called *iav*), which is often ornamented with an elaborate incised pattern (*iav a gōm*) emphasized by having lime rubbed over the lines (Pl. 72). The north coast people do not now make these carved specimens, but obtain them by barter from the mountain people. Often, however, they are 'too lazy' to make even a plain one by cleaning a coco-nut, and are content to keep their lime in empty cigarette tins or tobacco tins. No spatula is used, the nut being dipped straight into the lime-pot. I saw no mortars for use by old people, who, if they cannot open the nuts with their hardened gums, will get one of the youngsters to do it for them.

Areca-palms (*boi*) are cultivated, and are regarded as valuable property. There is also a kind of wild palm producing small nuts, which are also eaten, but only if the others are not available.

The betel-pepper (*Piper betel*) is cultivated. There are also wild varieties, of which I know three kinds; they have much smaller leaves and are less in favour. One, called *tʃutʃun*, is chewed especially by old women. All these varieties are parasitic on large trees. If a large quantity is required the stem will be severed near the ground and the whole plant pulled off the tree, but as a rule the fruit and leaves are carefully picked one by one so as not to injure the growing plant.

Lime is made from coral, branched coral being preferred. Its